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May 23, 2003

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Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Re: MB Docket No. 02-277; MM Docket Nos. 01-235, 01-317, 00-244

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Please place this letter from the Atlanta Independent Media Collective on the official record for the proceeding of MB Docket 02-277.

Thank you,


Jennifer Phurrough

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List A B C D E

The Honorable Commissioners of the FCC
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Media Ownership Proceedings

May 21, 2003

Dear FCC Commissioners,

This statement is made on behalf of the Atlanta Independent Media Center. Indymedia is a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, news coverage. Indymedia started precisely because of the situation we're here to discuss today: the effects of media deregulation in a representative democracy. The first Indymedia formed in late 1999 in Seattle to cover protests against the World Trade Organization. In the four years since then, roughly 110 local independent media centers have been created around the world. IMC Atlanta started in 2000. Our first major project was in-depth coverage of the protests against the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia, protests that have involved thousands of people and have included some of the largest acts of civil disobedience in a generation yet have received scant coverage by corporate media. The Atlanta IMC mission statement says we are currently a small but dedicated group of individuals working to subvert the corporate stranglehold of media in our city.

Now, you may not agree that there is corporate domination of the media, and you may not think it is a bad thing even if it exists. However, the proliferation of Indymedia around the world shows that there are plenty of people who do think corporate media domination is a reality and a detrimental one at that. To make matters worse, only a few corporations control the vast majority of major city newspapers and broadcast stations in this country and in this city, with direct political consequences. The pro-war rallies recently organized by Clearchannel radio stations represent the culmination of this trend. Corporate media coverage of the war with Iraq has been a timely reminder of the dangers of a press that acts less like investigative journalists and more like propagandists for the government's agenda.

The problem is not that the media giants have a point of view; of course they do. The problem is that they have the economic resources to crowd out all competition and therefore all competing ideas unless government regulators set limits. These limits have already been weakened and now Bush's FCC wants to remove any remaining restraints on concentration of ownership.

It is of the utmost importance that you remember whom the FCC is supposed to be serving: the public. The airwaves belong to us. The manner in which this matter is being handled is unbecoming of a representative democracy. Chairman Powell's refusal to postpone the June 2nd vote at the request of commissioners Adelstein and Copps on the public's behalf is indicative of whose interests are being served here. They are clearly not the public's.

Common wisdom dictates that people trying to sell you something should not be trusted. The fact that corporate news media conglomerates are pushing for further deregulation should be reason enough for us to consider the FCC's motivation with great skepticism. The citizens of the United States have much to lose in this situation. At best the corporate news is out to make more money; at worst they may end up controlling the course of our nation.

The tone for this "public debate" has been set by Chairman Powell, who refuses to make public the proposals FCC commissioners will be voting on June 2nd. A democracy is ineffective if the citizens aren't given enough information about the issues. Corporate media would have us believe that with the widespread use of cable, the Internet, digital satellites, and the like as forms of information, the old media ownership regulations are no longer important. We at the Atlanta Independent Media Center wholeheartedly disagree. Most American citizens still get their news from local stations. If the local channels weren't such an important medium with potential for profit, these corporations wouldn't be interested in owning more of them. While we cherish the

relative freedom the internet and other media provide, we realize that a substantial portion of the public still may not have access to these alternatives. We respectfully request that the FCC take into consideration all of the above when reviewing broadcast ownership rules this June 2nd.

Sincerely,
The Atlanta Independent Media Collective